(b) whether Government are formulating any specific scheme to modernize the military communication system of the country; and

(c) the likely amount to be allocated by Government for this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY) : (a) to (c) State-of-the-art communication systems are in place to meet the operational requirements on the borders. Upgradation and modernization of the systems is a continuous process.

Scheme to allow soldiers to keep families with them

†664. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a scheme to allow an army soldier to keep his family with him;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the total number of units where soldiers may be allowed to keep families with them by the Government at present; and

(d) the time by when Government proposes to implement this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY) : (a) to (d) Married soldiers above 25 years of age are provided married accommodation according to the scales of Authorised Married Establishment (AME). Soldiers at peace/modified field stations are authorized to keep their families with them. Additional accommodation under Married Accommodation Project is also being constructed to increase availability.

Decrease in number of commissioned officers

†665. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:
SHRI BHAGWATI SINGH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that number of commissioned officers in the military is decreasing from the designated capacity;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that number of officers in the military is less than capacity by more than 11,000;

(c) if so, whether Government will formulate any action plan to create awareness among youths regarding recruitment in military; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY) : (a) to (d) The overall deficiency of officers in the Army is around 24%. The deficiency has been continuing for some time. Presently, there is shortage of 11,153 officers, mainly in the ranks of Lt. Colonel and below.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Several steps have been undertaken to create awareness among the youth on the advantages of taking up a challenging and satisfying career in the Army. A number of 'Image Projection Campaigns' have been launched in this regard. Awareness campaigns, participation in career fairs and exhibitions, preparation of publicity materials, advertisements in print and electronic media, counseling and motivational talks in schools, colleges and NCC camps are also some of the other measures taken up in this direction.

Arms purchase agreements

666. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of arms purchase and defence supply agreement with various countries over the last 5 financial years including the quantum of agreements;

(b) whether these details shows the shift in our strategic relations from the traditional suppliers; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY) : (a) to (c) Government constantly review the security environment and accordingly decide to induct appropriate equipment for adequate defence preparedness.

Various countries from which imports were made during the last five years include Russia, Israel, France, the USA, the UK, Germany, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Australia and Ukraine.

Divulging further details in this regard will not be in the national interest.

Chief of defence staff

667. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to follow up on the Kargil Committee Reports and implement the suggestion for the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) for coordination amongst various wings of our defence forces; and

(b) if so, by when a final decision in the matter is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A. K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) The Group of Ministers (GoM) report on 'Reforming the National Security System' was presented to the Government in February 2001 in which amongst others, it was recommended to create the institution of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The Government approved the recommendations contained in the GoM report except those pertaining to institution of CDS for which it was decided that Government would take a view after consulting various political parties.

The process of consultation with political parties was initiated in March 2006 when the Raksha Mantri wrote a letter to leaders of various national level political parties. Only five parties have replied. Reminders were issued to the parties that did not respond on this issue.